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33

THE
CHRISTMAS
ROSE.

BY
H. J. WOOD.

Illustrated.

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D.H. FRISTON.

ASCENDING THE RIGHT.—*Page 204.*



THE CHRISTMAS ROSE.

BY H. J. WOOD.

At the romantic little village of Fluelen, which is at the extremity of the Lake of the Four Cantons, there lived a widow named Marie Müller, better known as Frau Doctorinn Müller. She had obtained this title from her late husband, who had been the doctor of the village and its surroundings, for more than fifty years. This good woman was much respected by her neighbours, and perhaps a little feared too; for in spite of some good qualities, she was harsh and severe, and having long been considered the wise-head of the village, she was apt to domineer over those who wanted her advice, or over those who depended on her bounty. The departed Doctor Müller had left his widow just enough to

live upon comfortably—a good house, a small garden, a farm, and a cow, and a little money to give away, therefore she was considered the richest inhabitant, of what was, in fact, a very poor place. She had secured the respect of the neighbourhood, by having adopted the orphan child of a poor neighbour. This neighbour had been attended on her death-bed by the Doctorinn, and her last hours were comforted, and her mind consoled, by knowing that her little Wilhelmina would never want whilst she had such a friend as the Frau Doctorinn, who had no children of her own, and had promised to bequeath to the orphan her little possessions.

The parting of the mother and child was very sad, but with that buoyancy of spirit, mercifully bestowed upon childhood, Wilhelmina could think of her mother in a few months without pain, and by that time she had become reconciled to her new home. She was old enough to understand her mother's parting words, "*Be a grateful child to God in heaven—and to your friends on earth—and—may we meet again!*" This was all that the failing strength of the fond mother permitted her to say to her child, but these words helped to guide the orphan, and they were never forgotten.

Doctorinn Müller very wisely gave the little stranger plenty to do out of school-hours; she made her help in milking, butter-making, and gardening, and she taught her knitting and spinning; but the occupation that Wilhelmina liked best was searching for herbs upon the mountains and in the valleys, which herbs the Doctorinn made into drinks, and lotions, and salves, for the poor patients who came to consult her about their little ailments, as her cottage continued to be a kind of village dispensary. Early in the morning Wilhelmina

was often seen with her little basket gathering balm, and all-heal, and peppermint, and dandelion, and camomile, and other medicinal herbs that grew wild in the neighbourhood.

The orphan had been christened Wilhelmina, after her father Wilhelm Brenner, whom she never knew, but Frau Doctorinn Müller said, "She should call her 'Mina ;' as she had not breath enough to spare for long names," and very soon every one followed her example. Mina had two favourite companions, school-fellows and playmates, and as they lived near, they often went with her in search of herbs. They climbed rocks together, crossed chasms, crept under waterfalls, made stepping-stones to cross streams, built grottoes of bits of granite and slate, and in a word, Mina Brenner, and Karl, and Annette Rennberg, were as healthy, strong, and happy, as only young mountaineers can be.

Karl had to help in his father's farm, and join him in summer in rowing travellers in his boat up the lake to Weggis, or even as far as Lucerne ; but they had no very hard work ; in fact, these children had no more to do than what was necessary to make their bodies healthy and their minds happy. During winter evenings the young people often met to sing together, and Karl's father could help them well, as he was one of the best singers and jodellers* in all Uri, and many a happy meeting and singing they had, as they grew up together.

Mina however had her little trials, and she often had need to remember her good mother's parting words, to prevent her repining at her godmother's severity, as she too often treated Mina's youthful faults as if they

* Pr. Yodellers.

were crimes. When the Frau Doctorinn felt very strongly, she was fond of quoting proverbs, especially those of Solomon, and if Mina happened to be a few minutes late in rising, instead of, "Good morning, Mina," it was, "Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways and be wise!" This was always a bad omen, for poor Mina could do nothing right the whole of that day, and she was called in turns "the evil-door," "the scorner," "the froward," or "a woman that lacketh discretion." But Mina's gentleness never failed, and her forbearance was never at fault. She remembered that valuable proverb of Solomon's, that "A soft answer turneth away wrath;" and if she even felt hurt at any act of injustice, she was too grateful to Frau Müller ever to complain of her, even to her friends Annette and Karl.

Frau Doctorinn Müller was not only an important person in Fluelen on account of her position, her worldly circumstances, and her healing art, but she had obtained a kind of superstitious reverence, in consequence of being the possessor of a certain miraculous plant, called the "Rose of Jericho." A few years after her marriage, the deceased doctor had received a visit from a celebrated botanist, with whom he had studied at Geneva, and this friend, out of respect to him and his wife, had presented her with his greatest botanical treasure, a dried plant from the East, which had the peculiar property of opening and expanding whenever it was placed in water, and he told her that many people in Germany pretended to foretell all future events by the manner in which the flower blew.

The specimen he gave her seemed to be thoroughly dried and dead, "But however shrivelled up it might

be," he said, "if put into water a hundred times, it would open again." He presented it on Christmas-eve, and after it had been put into a glass of water for a short period, it burst forth like a star. He had told her, smilingly, "that she had only to consult it, and she would know if any event were to come to pass, in which she was interested." Frau Müller could not find words strong enough to express her gratitude to her husband's friend for this great treasure. She was naturally fond of power, and rather superstitious, and it gratified her pride to be the owner of this wonderful plant, as a means of obtaining influence over others. She christened it the "Christmas Rose," and decided that she would only exhibit it on Christmas-eve, except in cases of life and death. For some years, those of her neighbours who had sick or absent friends, or such as were anxious about the next year's harvest, would assemble at the house of Doctor Müller to consult the plant; and he smiled at their credulity, but he did not interfere to prevent this harmless ceremony. His widow continued the custom, thus keeping up her influence over her dupes, until she firmly believed that she and her plant could foretell future events.

Just before her fifteenth birthday, Mina ventured to ask her godmother if she might begin to earn some money for herself, by weaving or spinning for the merchants of Zurich. This proposal was received with a frown and an angry refusal.

"Do you not know, Mina," said the Doctorinn, "that Solomon says, '*He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye,*' and '*Be not greedy of gain?*'"

Simple Mina had no desire to be rich, and she thought that her wish to provide for herself was not

“evil,” and though silenced, she was not convinced she was wrong; but when Solomon was quoted, she knew that the Doctorinn would never change her mind. In the course of that same day, however, better thoughts came into the mind of her godmother, for she remembered that in Solomon’s description of a virtuous woman, he says, “*She maketh fine linen and selleth it, and delivereth girdles to the merchants.*”

In order therefore to make up to Mina for her harsh reproof in the morning, and her contempt for her request, which would have been approved of by Solomon, she told her that she had planned a great treat for her birthday; that she was to invite Karl and Annette Rennberg to supper, and the afternoon they might pass upon the lake, as she was sure that Karl would be only too glad to row them in his father’s boat. She should go out herself, to spend the evening with a friend, as she knew, full well, their laughter would be to her as the crackling of thorns, that King Solomon speaks of, and she should enjoy a quiet gossip with Frau Bethmann, the grocerinn. The invitation was given, and the happy day at length arrived. Soon after breakfast her godmother told Mina that, to commemorate the day, she would show her the greatest treasure she possessed. Mina’s idea of a treasure was that of gold or jewels, though of the latter she had seen none, and very little of the former beyond earrings and crosses, so she fully expected something rare, or pretty, or brilliant, and the more so when a box was produced wrapped in embroidered silk. This box contained another box, and that another, beautifully carved and gilded, with a cross on the outside. Judge then of her amazement on the opening of the last, to behold a

withered plant, the colour of tobacco ; more like a dried marigold than anything else. Frau Müller raised it with great solemnity, and then she informed Mina that though dead, it would revive again. And as Solomon said of wisdom, "The merchandize of it is better than the merchandize of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold." Mina asked if she might see it blow in water. "No," said the pious Doctorinn, with a shudder. "That would be profane, and a sacrilege, my child ! Only at Christmas will it unfold, and then we will consult it. I think I will ask when the enemy will leave our country, and peace reign in the land ? I cannot do this until Christmas-eve, when my neighbours come here to consult my holy rose, and then alone will it foretell future events." This had been so often repeated by her, and believed by others, that the Doctorinn had quite forgotten how little authority or reason she had for saying this, and she seemed rather disappointed that Mina did not show more wonder and pleasure at beholding such a rare possession.

Mina had prepared for her small party the nicest of cakes, and the best of bread and butter, honey, kirchmuss,* and delicious curds and cream, for tea and coffee were then unknown in Switzerland. Karl and Annette arrived at two o'clock, and they all set off for the boat, with a small basket of apples and biscuits. The greatest part of Karl's pleasure was the row upon the lake, with two such nice light passengers, and they talked first of landing at Tell's Chapel, but they at length decided upon going to Weggis, and climbing a short way up the Righi, at least as far as the Kaltbad. Though it was late in the autumn, the scenery never looked more

* Cherry-jam.

lovely. Behind them the heights of St. Gothard, before them Mount Pilate, already with his snow cap on, and the borders of the lake with their fringe of golden trees and leaves. They were all equally sure that it never had been so beautiful since it was created. The air was so pure, and the sun so bright, that the tops of the mountains were reflected in the lake, and every beauty seemed doubled. The deep blue of the water was the deep blue of the sky, so that there seemed not only a heaven above them, but a heaven beneath them; no wonder they felt like happy spirits removed from earthly toil and trouble. They soon heard the distant shepherds' "call of the cows," and the jingling of their bells on the mountains. If Karl had slept in his boat, like Schiller's fisher-boy, he too might have dreamed that he heard "the angels in paradise." He rested on his oars, closed his eyes, and appeared too happy to speak or move. The girls laughed at him, dipped their hands in the lake, and sprinkled his face, and began to sing merrily—

" Come arouse thee ! arouse thee !
 My brave Swiss boy !
 Take thy oars, and to labour away !" etc.

When Karl was fairly roused, the merry trio began to sing an echo to the distant shepherds' song, "*Der sommer ist hin!*"* which may be thus rendered :—

" Farewell to the meadows,
 The lands of the sun ;
 Oh, cattle come homeward,
 Your summer is done.
 Come home ! come home !" etc.

Arrived at Weggis, the merry party leaped on shore, and Karl tied his boat to a stake, there to remain until

* The summer is gone.

their return ; and, armed with their Alpen-stocks, they set forth. In those days, before tourists flocked to the Righi from all parts of the world ; years before steamers plied upon the lake, when travellers were few and far between, there was no inn at Weggis where strangers could dine, and no hotel to receive them at the Righi Culm ; but a little refreshment might be bought at the doors of the châlets. So trustful were sellers, and so honest were buyers, that bowls of milk and cakes were laid out on small tables for wayfarers. They dipped a mug into a bowl of milk and drank it, or ate a cake, leaving behind a few *batzen*, either to the full value of what they took, or all they could afford to give ; for theft or distrust were unknown in these retired spots. After taking a draught of milk, our young mountaineers began their climbing very merrily, even the stumbles up and the slides down were amusing, for—

“ They turned to mirth all things of earth,
As only young folks can ! ”

The return home, too, would have been equally charming, had it not been the beginning of the end of the day ; and this excursion on the lake and up the Righi, they remembered years after as one of the happiest of their lives, though it proved to be the eve of many troubles. They enjoyed their evening meal most heartily, for of course no cakes had ever tasted so nice as those of Mina’s, and they finished off with pancakes and salad.

After that, Karl left the girls to take a run with his faithful dog Spitz, who had come to meet him at the landing-place ; and during his absence Mina showed Annette all her little treasures, safely placed in her godmother’s cabinet or *pult*, as she called it. Her father’s

watch and her mother's wedding-ring, and her gold cross and earrings, were looked upon with great interest; and besides these there was a silver christening-cup, presented by the good Doctor Müller to his godchild. Mina then told Annette about the wonderful plant she had been shown in the morning, called the "Christmas Rose." Of this Annette remembered to have heard her mother speak, as a most remarkable flower, therefore Mina, with the very natural desire to gratify her friend's curiosity, opened the secret door of the cabinet and took out the mysterious parcel. Box after box was opened, and at length the sacred plant was disclosed. To Annette also it only appeared like dried stalks with shrivelled heads to them—mere rubbish, yet she begged Mina to keep it out to show Karl when he came back. Spitz's bark was soon heard, and his master followed him, and, before the rose was exhibited, Mina told Karl all about its curious ways, and by what means it had came into her godmother's hands. Of course he doubted that it would ever bloom again, and, boy-like, declared that he would try it there and then by putting it in a jug of water, and he snatched it up for the purpose. Both the girls intreated him to lay it down, and Mina went so far as to say "she would never forgive him if he did any harm to this precious rose." Karl was not an unprincipled nor a selfish lad, therefore he laid down this strange treasure without taking any further notice of it. Just at this moment drums and trumpets were heard approaching the village, and the young people instantly ran to the door, "The French are come!" they said, as if with one voice.

Troops had been expected for some time, and, as they were to be quartered upon the people of Fluelen,

the sound of drums and trumpets, though it pleased the young, was a sound of dismay to the ears of their parents. After gazing awhile at the unusual sight of soldiers, Annette and Mina returned to the little parlour, and then Mina remembered that she had to replace the Christmas rose very carefully in the boxes. Alas ! alas ! no rose was there.

"Oh, Karl, you have put it in your pocket," said Annette, running to the door.

"No, indeed," answered the accused, "I laid it down on the table, and it must have fallen down." Then began a search on the floor and in all parts of the room—all in vain. Karl at last went to the door, and there he beheld his favourite dog Spitz worrying and tearing the precious plant into bits, and nothing was left whole but a few stalks—a few hard, dry stalks that might have belonged to any common decayed flower.

At this sight poor Mina cried out in an agony, "What shall I do ? What will become of me ? What *can* I do ? Do you not pity me ?"

Karl, not knowing the full extent of the evil, could not understand why Mina showed such fear and grief, and why she appeared so terrified. However, in his regret at seeing her distress at the mischief done, he seized a stick, and began to belabour Spitz unmercifully ; but, even in her sorrow, poor Mina's tender heart made her exclaim, "Oh, do not beat the dog, Karl ! He did not know he was doing wrong, but *I* did. I had no right to open Frau Müller's boxes. I have punished myself, and oh how severely !"

In the height of the confusion Frau Doctorinn Müller arrived home, and, instead of finding a happy

party, Mina was hiding her face with her hands and sobbing bitterly, and the dog was howling at the door. They could not have looked more dismayed had an avalanche fallen on them from the overhanging mountain. Karl came forward directly, like a man, and said, "What has happened is my fault, Frau Müller, my dog has destroyed your wonderful plant. I ought not to have brought him into your house!"

She looked around at these words, and, though it was dusk, she beheld on the table the opened, empty boxes. For a few seconds her voice was choked with passion, but at length she exclaimed, "Get out of my house, you wicked robber. Never let me see you or your sister's face more! Never darken my doors again as long as you live! I would turn out this ungrateful child, if I had not promised her mother that I would keep her as long as I lived."

At this poor wretched Mina threw herself on her knees and implored pardon, and Annette only wished that she could take some of the blame, in order to share it with those she loved and felt for, and Karl, intending to soothe the enraged Frau, exclaimed, "I will procure you another plant, if I die for it."

"You, indeed," screamed the angry woman; "you replace my holy flower, the Rose of Jericho, the plant of Palestine, the star of the East, my precious Christmas Rose! There is none like it nearer than Jerusalem, or Rome, or Jericho. Leave my house, I say once more!"

Before he left he again assured Frau Müller that Mina was not to blame; but Annette whispered to him that they had better go away and say no more, as they could do no good by remaining. As they left they heard

the words, "The wicked flee; the evil one shall be cut off!"

Poor Mina then went up to bed and cried herself to sleep, and thus ended her fifteenth birthday.

II.

ALTHOUGH Mina felt that she had lost her only friends and companions for ever, she felt still more deeply the injury she had committed to one who had been a mother to her when she had no friend in the world. The evil too that she had caused was one that she could not repair, or she would have thought no labour nor sacrifice too great to console her bereaved godmother. Tired with unusual exercise and grief, she slept a few hours very soundly, and then dreamed that Karl had travelled to a far country and found a Christmas Rose. This dream impressed her with the belief that the destroyed flower could not be the only one in the world, and that some day she might purchase one in exchange for her mother's earrings and her father's watch; she should still have their wedding-ring and her mother's cross.

The first news she heard in the morning was very bad. Part of the French army, now in Switzerland, was to be quartered in the neighbouring villages for the winter. This was in the year 1799, a grievous period for the poor Swiss, whose country was invaded by the French, and who could offer no opposition, unaided by the Austrians. Lucerne and Zurich were the scenes of various encounters, and all the neighbouring cantons were in a state of great alarm.

Ruin and destruction seemed coming upon Frau

Müller when a tall moustached engineer was quartered upon her. He could speak no German, and she could speak no French therefore all their intercourse was by signs. She, to be sure, was able to make all sorts of cutting remarks on the "armèd man," "the spoiler," without any retort from the engineer.

The gentle looks and manners of Mina, and her "*Bon jour!*" and "*Bonne nuit!*" which she had picked up with a few other words of French, seemed to console him for the harsh looks of the Frau Doctorinn, whose native hospitality led her to spread a good dinner before her guest; but when she raised her hands and exclaimed, "He who stirreth up strife shall be cut off at once," "*Amen!*" responded the engineer, for he thought that the old lady was saying grace. Mina then asked if she might say the grace she had learned at school; and her soft voice, in his own language, seemed to give a pleasant flavour to the enemy's dinner, and gradually he became interested in his hostess and her goddaughter. It seemed very hard to Frau Müller to have to bestow her bread upon these "Philistines," but since she had lost her charm, her talisman, in the Christmas Rose, hope seemed dead within her, and despair only alive. Days and weeks rolled on, in which poor Mina fulfilled her duties with an aching heart, hopeless now of any chance of gaining a pleasant word or kind look from her godmother.

One day in the middle of December, to her great delight, she met Annette Rennberg in the village, who informed her, that Karl had decided upon going all the way to Zurich to visit a professor of botany, and that, when he had saved money enough, his father had promised to spare him from home, and he felt almost

sure he should be able to purchase a Christmas Rose of the professor.

This information cheered poor Mina more than any words she had heard for months, and she told Annette that she thought she could sell her father's watch to the engineer who was staying with them. Annette said that Karl had better take the watch with him, and only sell it in case he found the price of the Christmas Rose beyond his means. Mina begged that he would spare no expense, for no money could be too much for her to give to repair the injury she had done to her godmother.

Karl had heard of the Botanical Garden at Zurich, from Professor Blumenthal, whom he and his father had often rowed upon the lake when he was staying at Fluelen to botanize in the neighbourhood. It occurred to Karl that a garden such as that at Zurich had been described to him, must contain many specimens of the Christmas Rose, and in his simplicity he thought that one could be procured at this season better than at any other. He therefore begged Annette to waylay Mina in her walks, and tell her of his scheme, and how his father could well spare him when work was slack, both in the farm and on the lake; which, however, he owned, gave him more time but less money.

The Doctorinn had impressed Mina with the belief that there were but few such plants as her Christmas Rose in the world; but hope is apt to grow in the young mind with only a little soil. So she planted the hope, and it grew, and the only cheerful hour she had had for a long time, was when she sped forth to meet Annette, and presented her the watch for Karl. It was something done and sacrificed to repair the evil she had

committed ; and her heart felt lighter, and she went sooner to sleep that night.

It was now the period that the foreign troops were laid up for the winter, and therefore Karl trusted that he might pass from one canton to another without interruption and without a passport. In due time he procured money enough for his journey to Zurich without selling Mina's watch, and he boldly declared that he would not return home without the coveted plant ; and Annette and Mina never chanced to meet for a few minutes without talking of the dangers Karl might incur from the lawless soldiery. Mina said that he was like Noah's dove sent out from the ark to bring back good tidings, not resting the sole of his foot until he had found the olive-branch which was to bring joy and peace to their hearts. Then they blessed him for his kind intention, and put up prayers for his safety and success.

Karl reached Zurich without more difficulties than he could overcome. On showing the name and address of Professor Blumenthal (which he had himself written) to the sentinel at the gates of the town, Karl was allowed to pass freely. Arrived at the Botanic Garden, he was informed, by the head-gardener, that, during the leisure of winter, the Herr Professor had gone to visit a friend at Geneva. This was very bad news for Karl, but he ventured to explain the object of his visit to the gardener, who listened very civilly to his description of the plant he was in search of.

The man had heard of a flower which some people called the Winter Rose or Christmas Rose, but which is no rose at all, but a species of Hellebore, which is quite white, and blossoms at Christmas. Karl then showed the small fragments of stalk of the destroyed plant, on

looking at which the man declared that it could not be the hellebore, or Winter Rose. Karl was much surprised to find that any one in a Botanic Garden should never have heard of the true Christmas Rose possessing such wonderful powers. "It was not like a rose," Karl said; "it might have another name."

"Ah," said the gardener, "I guess now what you mean, it is the *Rhododendron feruginum*, it grows on the higher Alps, and is called by travellers the Alpine Rose, because the flower is rose colour. You will find it on the Righi, not far from here; it grows in the clefts of the rocks, on the most barren soil, or on the sandy banks which surround the glaciers."

"Oh yes," cried Karl, "that must be the very thing, for I was told that it could not be obtained without much difficulty and danger."

"You have only to climb like a goat," said the gardener, "and you will find it. People make such mistakes about the names of flowers! It is the Alpine Rose you want, and it grows upon the Righi."

"To-morrow," exclaimed Karl, "I will ascend the mountain and search till I find it."

"Fair and softly young man, you have some time to wait, that flower does not blossom until June, and we are in December. You would find nothing now but snow and icicles, and dead plants in the crevices of the rocks." The gardener then fetched a pot containing a specimen of it to show him.

Karl hoped that by the offer of a little money he could secure his prize on the spot; but the trustworthy gardener said, "That he could neither sell nor give away the smallest thing intrusted to his care," and Karl was himself too strictly honest to wish to bribe him.

There was therefore nothing for him but to climb the Righi, and he rejoiced to think that the much-longed-for plant was within reach. He went to rest and sleep at the house of an aunt of his at Wiedekin, who, though glad to see him, was grieved to hear of the intended journey on the morrow ; and he did not like to explain to her what must appear a very wild-goose chase.

“ My dear nephew,” said she, “ these are sad and dangerous times, and I dread lest some serious misfortune should befall you. The villages are filled with soldiers, and they are a desperate set ; suppose they were to enlist you, and make you wear the tri-coloured cockade ? ”

“ Never fear, dear aunt ; if I enlist it will be to join my fellow-countrymen.”

Karl set out early the next morning, after a good breakfast and a good blessing from his aunt. It never occurred to him, it is true, that a young man travelling on foot, without arms, and with no other object than to climb the Righi for a plant, could be suspected either by the French or Austrians ; but he ought to have had a passport *visé* by the authorities. Unfortunately he missed his way to Zug, and arrived at Konau, on the way to Lucerne. Here he was asked, “ Where he had been and where he was going ? ” and desired to show his passport. He replied, “ That he had been to Zurich and was going to Zug, and that he had no passport to show.” The sentinel said he was a very suspicious person and must be arrested, as some disturbance had just taken place at Russwyl, and, as he was found on the road to Lucerne, under the pretence of going to Zug, he was a very doubtful character. As delay would be serious to one who had neither an abundance

of time nor money, Karl begged that he might be taken before the prefect of the commune.

It was in vain that he protested his innocence, or declared to the prefect that his sole object was to ascend the Righi in search of a plant. At such a season it seemed a false pretence, got up to deceive. To climb the Righi in winter, when every part of it was covered with snow, in search of a plant which could not then be found, could only be the excuse of a spy or an emissary sent by the rebels of Zurich. "Fortunately," continued the prefect, "you are not a very dangerous person, or you would have invented a better reason for travelling than botanizing in the snow." Karl was then searched, and nothing being found upon him, his countenance and manner too speaking in his favour, the prefect put him in charge of a corporal, who was to conduct him back to that part of the road which turned off to Zug. Karl protested against this in vain, but, after walking a mile, he persuaded the corporal, by the offer of a florin, to let him find his own way.

At Cappel he was again rigorously searched, and again he was released as no charge could be made out against him; so he trudged on, and arrived at Arth at nightfall. At Konau he had been taken for an emissary of the Austrians against the French, here he was looked upon as a French spy who wanted to reconnoitre the passes of the mountains, and as soon as they found that he desired information concerning the nearest ascent of the Righi, they no longer doubted that his mission was to take a plan of the surrounding country, which can be viewed distinctly from its summit, and to place this plan in the hands of the enemy. In vain he protested that he had no such design, and that he was

only going up the mountain in search of a plant; he opened his travelling bag and showed them that he had neither paper nor pencil—in fact, nothing to enable him to draw any plan or to take any notes. Soldiers are obstinate, and being heated by wine they began to insult him, and they would have come to blows had not the hostess taken pity on the young traveller. She was sure she had seen him at Wiedekin, so she made a sign to him and made believe to push him to the door to get rid of him, and then she led him to a barn, and told him to lie there quietly for a few hours and set off at break of day. “She did not think he was a spy, and he should have fair play.” Karl thanked the kind woman heartily, and confirmed her belief in his innocence by his generosity. He threw himself on some straw, and fell into a sound sleep, and at dawn he crept out of his hiding-place and proceeded on his road towards the Righi.

Karl’s eyes were soon fixed upon the summit of that mountain which concealed his treasure. Fortunately for him he met a shepherd who agreed for two florins to be his guide up the mountain, and they soon began to climb like two devout pilgrims up the steep road to the Hospice. They then entered a dense fog, and proceeded by rough and narrow paths with a steep wall of rock on one side, and a deep declivity on the other down to the lake below. They passed through clefts of snow and blocks of ice which covered these high regions and weighed down the branches of the dark firs. Solemn silence seemed to reign over this mountain-world only broken by the noise of torrents falling from the rocks beneath, or the distant thunder of the awful avalanche. The morning air was freezing, and soon the travellers’ locks were covered with hoar frost, and their warm

breath became congealed on their lips. The paths grew steeper and more dangerous, but the young shepherd climbed like a chamois, and his companion followed, bravely inspired by the conviction that every step brought him nearer to the great object of his ambition.

The young guide knew the Alpine Rose well, and he promised to find the very spot where it grew in abundance. "It is there," he said, "that I go for bunches of it in summer on a Saturday, to sell them to the young lasses at Arth to put in their hats on Sunday. "Ah! if you only knew what a fine bright rose-colour it is,—but now it is quite dry and withered. Come here in the month of July, and then you will see how it comes to life again!" This account was very encouraging to Karl, but I hope, thought he, it will revive on Christmas-eve by the aid of Frau Doctorinn Müller. Inspired by this bright idea he proceeded rapidly, but in his hot haste he leaped upon a mass of ice concealed under the snow, slipped and fell down many feet until he was stopped by a projecting rock, which prevented his rolling down the awful precipice beneath. His fall, however, caused a severe contusion on his head, and his right hand was sprained in trying to save himself. The severe pain deprived him of his senses; fortunately for him, his companion was active and experienced, and he contrived to stop the bleeding of the wound by applying a piece of ice to it. In time, Karl came to himself; as his face and hands were covered with blood he washed them with snow and tied his black cravat over his forehead, and bound a garter round his sprained wrist, and once more his courage revived and he climbed on. He tried to fancy himself a brave warrior engaged in a

glorious enterprise, and he even thought how his brave countryman, William Tell, would have acted in such circumstances.

By dint of toil and trouble, the travellers reached at last the Hospice of the Capuchins, and they heard the little bell of the chapel of Our Lady of the Snows.* Gloomy clouds obscured the Lake of Zug, and the valley of Goldau lay in mist. Mass ended, the Friars came forth and opened their gates, and Karl and his guide were allowed to enter. The good Capuchins were astonished at beholding a traveller in the mountains at this season of the year; they however showed a deep interest in the object of Karl's pursuit, and they examined and bound up his wounds in order that he might proceed. They were glad to receive information concerning the valleys in such disastrous times, for these were the only people they had seen since the winter began. Karl told them in a few words that the general opinion was, that the Austrians were in possession of the strongest places, and that the French must soon leave the country; at which intelligence the reverend friars poured forth a blessing to God. In return for this good news, they offered to make him some hot soup; but this would cause a delay of an hour at least, so Karl said he was too impatient to procure the miraculous plant to accept their offer. The Capuchins thought the youth must be a little deranged when he entreated them to point out where he could find the Alpine Rose in its dried state. The young shepherd thought he knew well where it grew, but as he might be mistaken, he gladly accepted the offer of a guide. The friars summoned one, and desired him to put on a

* *Sainte Marie aux Neiges.*

pair of shoes with rough iron clumps on the soles, and also to find the same for the strangers, that they might walk rough-shod to the heights where the Rhododendron grew. Thus secured, and with their stout Alpenstocks, they set out. They went by a distant path to a small glacier ; Karl, unused to such heavy clogs, had much difficulty in climbing the little mounds of hardened snow that whirlwinds had drifted, and after slipping back very often, instead of advancing, they at last reached a spot more exposed to the mid-day sun. At last the guide discovered several roots of the Alpine Rose, which were shrivelled and frozen deep into the clefts of the rocks. Karl seized upon them, and tore up as many as his handkerchief could contain. Whilst he was gathering them the clouds dispersed, and he had a glimpse of the splendid prospect the height commanded. Noble Mount Pilate and the once lovely valleys were all in their winter shrouds, but still sublime. He could not think without pain of the bright scene on Mina's birthday when they were on the lake beneath them, and he felt as if he had by some mischance lost a paradise which he might never regain. Youth, however, is hopeful, and he trusted that out of the dry sticks that he held in his hand some blossoms might come forth. He was beginning to be superstitious about the Christmas Rose, as well as the Frau Doctorinn. Delighted at his success, he returned in haste to the hospice, and again accepted the hospitality of the Capuchins, bathed his wounds once more, and took the hot soup that he had before refused. When thoroughly restored, he took leave of the friars and descended with his guide more quickly and safely than they had mounted, having had the best path pointed out to them by the monks. At each place

that he had been arrested by the French sentinels, he made a point of showing the oots of the Alpine Rose as a proof that he was neither a spy nor a deceiver.

Whilst Karl was pursuing his last day's journey to Fluelen, poor Mina was enduring a day of torture. The return of Chistmas-eve had brought with it the remembrance of the lost rose. This loss Frau Müller had hitherto kept a secret from her neighbours; as she had been so proud of her possession of it, she could not humble herself to own it was hers no longer, and that she was bereaved of this supernatural power. It had been her custom to have her room lighted up soon after four o'clock, and instead of a Christmas tree to display her Christmas Rose. One neighbour would come to consult this oracle to know if her suffering child would soon cut its teeth; another wished to know when her husband would lose his rheumatism; another wished to know beforehand if the next would be a good harvest. In fact, there were few in Fluelen who did not wish to have a peep into futurity. Mina had hoped the neighbours would this year be dismissed on the plea of the Doctorinn being "poorly," which she really was. But all at once she desired to give vent to her vexation and distress of mind, and one after the other as the neighbours arrived, they were informed "that her quiet dwelling-place had been the prey of the spoiler; a thief in the night had entered into her abode and robbed her!" The accounts were all so different from the actual fact, that Mina began to think that her godmother's brain had been turned by vexation and sorrow; indeed, she had never been quite collected since the French engineer had been living upon her. It might be that the pious old lady could not bear to own that a dog had destroyed her sacred rose; Mina was all the more miser-

able, as she almost felt guilty of having upset her god-mother's intellect. In order to calm her, she proposed, when the neighbours left, that she should lie down until supper-time. This was the time when Karl had said, "If he were living, he would return with the Christmas Rose. Agitated, and uneasy, lest some danger had befallen him, she listened to all that passed without; suddenly she hears the barking of a dog—of the culprit Spitz; then a well known voice exclaimed, "Hollo!" Half in fear and half in hope she raises the latch and opens the door. "Oh, Karl!" was all she could say, for she saw a wretched, wounded, tired youth before her. Somewhat relieved by his cheerful smile, she said, "Come in and rest, and the Doctorinn will heal your wounds."

"Thanks, a thousand thanks!"

"But how comes it that you are wounded; what have you done?"

Karl was too ill and too much exhausted to speak, but he entered and sat down.

On hearing Mina's voice talking to some one in the room below, Frau Müller got up and came down to the parlour. She no sooner beheld Karl than she almost screamed out, "Down, down on your knees and pray for your sins!"

"Be tranquil, Frau Doctorinn," said Karl, in a feeble voice; "I am not an evil spirit; I should not have entered your doors had I not brought with me the Christmas Rose!" These words acted as a spell. "Pardon me," pursued the almost fainting youth, "for coming so late; I fell upon the ice!" These few words accounted for the battered state of his head and his arm being in a sling. "I have endeavoured to repair the

great mischief my dog committed, and at the peril of my life. Thank God, I have been able to procure you several roots of the Christmas Rose ; I obtained them on the top of the Righi." On saying this Karl untied the bundle and displayed the plant upon the table.

"Just Heaven!" exclaimed the enraged Doctorinn, "Do you dare to think of appeasing my wrath by bringing me a bundle of rubbish? You have come to ridicule and insult me!"

"This is the real Alpine Rose, Frau Muller," timidly rejoined Karl.

"*The real Alpine Rose*, what have I to do with that? Could you believe that this vulgar plant that grows in our mountains can be put in comparison with my holy Rose of Sharon—my Rose of Jericho—my Christmas Rose, that though dead will come to life? You could *not* believe it. A lying tongue is but for a moment; 'Beware of dogs, beware of evil-workers.' Leave my house this instant, and take your rubbish with you!"

Upon this the angry Frau took up the handkerchief and the roots, as if to throw them at Karl.

At length Mina gained courage to speak, "Dear godmother, Karl meant no harm, he had the best intentions. If he has not been fortunate enough to find the right plant, look at him, he has risked his own life for you; he is covered with scars and wounds!"

"Hold your tongue, Mina; what fellowship hath the wolf with the lamb? Hold no communication with works of darkness!"

Whilst Mina spoke Karl stayed; but now, though faint and weary, he rose to go.

“Yes, go ! to blot out your sin, clothe yourself in sackcloth and ashes, and put peas in your shoes, and take a white staff in your hand, and set off on a pilgrimage to the Holy Land ; and when there go to the foot of the Mount of Olives or to the city of Jericho, and there—and there only—will you find a plant like my holy rose !”

Frau Müller had talked herself out of breath, so she pointed to the door and threw the handkerchief and the plants at his feet. Karl could only look a farewell to Mina, for his heart was too full to speak.

III.

DAYS and months rolled on, and Karl longed to do what, in her anger, the Doctorinn had commanded him. Willingly would he have taken the pilgrim’s staff, and gone to the Holy Land, if he could have been sure of procuring the Christmas Rose, which he thought would make them all happy once more. His country, or rather all the neighbouring cantons, were in a most disturbed state, and there had already been some question of his enlisting. The canton of Uri had enrolled a choice corps, and many respectable young men had taken up arms. The Austrian troops were advancing daily, and as reinforcements had passed the frontiers at several points, there was increased excitement, and the Swiss began to hope that the French might be repulsed. At first Karl’s father was unwilling to part with his son, but the quartering of foreign troops in all the villages near Lucerne had been a great tax upon the inhabitants, and

on Karl's part he had taken a disgust to his once loved home, for as soon as it was known in the village that he had been the cause of the destruction of what the simple people considered an oracle, he had become an object of dislike to all the female inhabitants of Fluelen, and hence his increased desire to leave home. Karl would rather have turned pilgrim, yet he had a vague idea that he might find comfort out of Fluelen, and by some happy chance that he might meet with a Christmas Rose—the one all-pervading idea of his simple mind, which his sister Annette encouraged, and fully shared. His resolution was at length taken; his small outfit prepared, and in the month of May he entered a choice corps of Helvetian troops, and joined the camp. For some weeks the novelty of his situation, the drill, and his new companions, diverted his mind, and home troubles were forgotten. He soon, however, separated from the Austrian privates, though allies, as their habits were wild and dissolute. His own good conduct made him a great favourite with the officers of his regiment; and at the end of a month he was made a corporal. The corps to which he belonged approached a village occupied by the French, and the Austrians began to destroy all before them. The parsonage was the principal object, being a likely place for booty. The Helvetians, following the example of their allies, tore up palings, doors, windows, and even furniture, for the purpose of making fires, by which to bivouac. Already they had destroyed the palisades and verandahs of the pastor's dwelling, and they began to seize upon the household furniture. The venerable pastor had defended his property with all his might, but in vain. When Karl arrived to command order, and prevent such cruel injustice, he

found the aged man in the hall entreating the soldiers to spare a piece of furniture which he seemed to hold in great estimation. The corporal used his authority, and partly by persuasion, and partly by bodily strength, he compelled the lawless men to desist and disperse. When they retreated, the good pastor thanked Karl for his services in saving a cabinet, which would have been a serious loss to him. He then told him that he had cheered his solitude by the study of botany, and that his cabinet contained choice books and specimens of rare plants. This information awakened Karl's interest for the much-longed-for Christmas Rose, and of course he asked the pastor if he had such a treasure.

"No," replied the enthusiastic botanist; "I have not, but I can show you a picture of it in a book." This seemed good news, as the book might say where it could be found, and he quickly followed the old pastor to his study. A large volume was taken down, the dust blown off it, and the page opened, and the plate displayed, when he read to Karl as follows:—"The Rose of Jericho has not the slightest resemblance to an ordinary rose, and it is known by many other names. Linnæus places it in the first order *Siliculosa*, of the fifteenth class, and he calls it *Anastatica*, which means *reviving*. It is also named *Hierosoly mitana Sancta Maria*," said he. All this was Greek to poor Karl, though he listened patiently, but when the passage concluded with, "Its native soil is on the borders of the Red Sea; in the deserts of Syria it may be found, or at the foot of Mount Sinai,"—he then heaved a deep sigh, almost a groan. The good pastor, too much absorbed in his subject, did not hear this, so he continued: "In olden times, when piety attributed something holy to all the pro-



ductions of Palestine, the pilgrims and crusaders brought these flowers away as something sacred and rare, and they were sold as oracles or talismans, to secure health or predict future events."

"Such superstition is long past," said the pious pastor, "and I hope it is not for this reason you show such interest in the plant?"

"No, sir," stammered the young corporal, "it is not for myself exactly, but I wish to procure one, to purchase one at any price. Where can I obtain it?"

"Let me remember," replied the pastor, putting his finger to the side of his nose; "a friend of mine had one that he gave to Doctor Müller, of Fluelen." Here Karl shuddered. "Then I remember that Peter Fussli, of Zurich, brought one back with him on his return from Syria, and he left it to his granddaughter, and she lives in Zurich, and her name is ——; I have it at the tip of my tongue; her name is ——"

"To arms! to arms! The French are upon us!" was heard outside, by a hundred voices at once. The cry was followed by a clashing of swords, and volley of fire-arms. Karl ran to join his troop, and the terrified pastor to secure his folios and his precious volumes from the enemy. Karl descended the stairs helter-skelter, in a state of distress, lest he should not reach his post of duty. The Swiss assembled, the Austrians advanced; the battle began, and the French were totally repulsed. Karl advanced with the army, and never more saw the good pastor who had the name of the possessor of a Christmas Rose at the very tip of his tongue.

When not overpowered by numbers, the French gained once more the ascendancy, but the success of either side seemed to bring no peace or comfort to the Swiss. The little Helvetian troop diminished daily, and Karl only remained amongst them from a principle of honour, and he was almost alone at the gates of Zurich, where the French were about to enter, and then only did he feel absolved from his military duty. Having no desire to be a prisoner, he made his escape and resumed his old clothes, and remained concealed with his aunt at Wiedekin.

It fell to the lot of old Fraulein Rennberg to have three hussars and a Hungarian marshal quartered in

her house ; the latter, though very fierce-looking, with his long beard and grisly moustaches, was one of the kindest men in the world. By his courtesy and information he gained the respect of both aunt and nephew, and he almost entered into their feelings of regret at being disturbed in their peaceful life by an invading army.

However, he tried to rouse Karl, and induce him to become a brave hussar. "A light horseman in an open country, sword in hand, flying like the wind ; what can compare with that ? Take courage, become a hussar for six or seven years, then return to your own country again, and settle down as a patriarch with some pretty Swiss Rachel !"

"Thank you, good marshal, but there is no such luck in store for me," said the desponding Karl.

"Perhaps there is, young fellow, and if it were only winter I could tell your fortune !"

"Why in winter and not in summer ?" asked Karl anxiously.

"Because it is only upon Christmas-eve that I can predict with any certainty. Then," added the hussar, in a low solemn voice, "I could consult a very sacred oracle, a ——"

"Can it be the Rose of Jericho ?" said Karl.

"Truly so ; but how came you, an infidel, to know anything about the Rose of Jericho ?" demanded the soldier in his turn.

Karl then told him the whole story of the Christmas Rose, and Madame Muller, at Fluelen, and how he had not only been banished from her house, but how he and his dog had become objects of hatred to all the inhabitants of the village, which caused him to enlist. He

entreathed the hussar to tell him how he might obtain one, and thus be enabled to return home.

"I can show you mine," said he, "which I always carry about me, but I cannot part with it, nor tell you where to find one. You and your aunt are good creatures, but you are not Christians."

"Not Christians! As good as yourself I hope and believe; at least, my aunt is."

"Well, well! don't be angry, it is possible after all, since you respect the Christmas Rose. I will, therefore, show it to you, and tell you the history of mine."

Upon this he opened his caftan and drew out a Turkish silk handkerchief, and slowly unfolded from it a dry, crumpled, stalky plant with circular seed vessels, in every respect like the old pastor's picture of it.

"I was once a prisoner in Belgrade," said the marshal, where I met with a Jew who had several of these Jericho Roses for sale. I had heard my mother speak of this flower, which blew on Christmas-eve. The dear, good woman had often wished for one, and as he had several of these flowers I thought he would sell me one. A charitable Frenchman had given me a few paras to buy some tobacco, so I resolved to give up smoking for some time; I own it was a sacrifice, as I had no comfort but my pipe; he, however, was in want of money, and he took my paras in exchange for a Rose of Jericho, and this is it. I placed it in water on Christmas-eve, to see if I should be released from prison. The flower bloomed favourably, and I was ransomed shortly after."

Karl then ventured to ask for what sum he would part with it.

"Part with it!" said the infuriated Hungarian, with

an oath. "Does this little white-faced youth imagine that for filthy lucre I should dispose of this holy amulet that has preserved me in safety in so many battles? No, no! Don't ask me again."

Early on the morning of the 14th of August there were some slight skirmishes, then the French attacked the whole line, and the combat became general and severe. Karl went towards the field of battle, and ran from one height to another, in order to discover, amidst fire and smoke, where his dear old marshal was commanding. He asked of every hussar who galloped by where his officer was. No one had seen him lately. Careless of danger, Karl plunged into the thickest of the fight, and there he soon beheld, with grief and sorrow, that his friend had fallen, and was being borne along by two privates. The old marshal had fallen from his horse severely wounded, and he was soon placed upon a litter and carried off the field. When Karl had somewhat recovered himself he followed the surgeon, and approaching the wounded officer he said gently—

"Oh, my good friend, have I found you at last in such sad plight?"

The marshal felt death approaching, but he was pleased to see Karl once more, and to hear his friendly voice again.

"It is all over with me," he said in a faint whisper; "but I am content to die on the field of battle; on the field of honour, and in your arms! Do not carry me any farther, you make me suffer! Karl, come close to me!"

Poor Karl placed his face close to that of the veteran, as if to receive his last breath.

"I am dying, but I wish to make one person happy

before I go—take this rose—I bequeath it to you. It is now yours!" He put his feeble hand into his bosom, and drew out the handkerchief containing his treasure, gave it to the weeping Karl, and expired.

Who can doubt but that sorrow, and sorrow only was the feeling of that young man's heart? He heard not the cry of the French, "Forward! Forward!" which was mingled with the firing of guns, and the rolling of cannon. French riflemen advanced and surrounded the group, and commanded them to surrender; then they took Karl from the body of the marshal, which they despoiled of his uniform, and everything valuable. They then pushed the prisoners with their bayonets towards a neighbouring wood, and there all of them were rifled of everything they possessed, and Karl's money and watch, and a pocketbook, were all seized as lawful prizes. Karl cried out to his companions, "We must take to our heels." And he led them through the wood; as he knew that the Sihl flowed on the other side of it. Our hero could swim like a fish, and he soon plunged into the river, thinking that if he could distance his companions, he might, if alone, find means of escape. Karl had pulled off his clothes, and tied them in a bundle round his neck, securely fastening his beloved rose. Having safely reached the opposite bank, he began to dress. What was his consternation and regret on finding that his cherished flower was gone! Either by the effort he made in swimming, or by the strong current of the water, the handkerchief tied round his body was loosened, and the treasure gone. In very despair, he again plunged into the river; following the current, he saw at a distance the handkerchief floating on the water, but no rose

was there ! In returning to the spot where his clothes lay, he beheld the plant entangled in some reeds, and the flower expanded by the water to double its former size ! "Oh, wonderful miracle !" he exclaimed, "the rose is alive !" It is no mistake he thought ; the water has restored its powers, and neither warm water nor Christmas-eve is essential to its life—to its revival.

At the same time Karl's friends at Fluelen were also suffering many trials and sorrows. The French troops, when not on duty, were idle and lawless, and the once quiet and happy people at Fluelen were kept in a state of continued alarm. It is true that the farmers were often paid for their produce, but much oftener they had to supply unjust demands, and they were despoiled of all their little luxuries, as their fowls, and fruit, and honey, and butter were deemed lawful booty. Frau Müller was sorely tried, but real affliction had made her forget her imaginary troubles and vexations. She had become more kind and considerate towards others, and more tender to her patient companion, the sorely tried Mina. Her godmother had acknowledged to her, that before she was afflicted, she had gone astray, and that now she hoped that a right spirit had been renewed within her. Mina was no longer "the scorner," "the froward ;" and one day her godmother actually said, "She thought she was becoming like the virtuous woman spoken of by Solomon, who opened her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness, and she eateth not the bread of idleness." This praise brought joy to Mina's heart, whilst it brought tears to her eyes. Mina, as well as all the young girls of Fluelen, was a source of anxiety to their friends, as they were exposed to insult and danger from the lawless soldiery ; and at length Frau

Müller decided upon leaving the neighbourhood, and accepting the offer of a refuge with her deceased husband's brother, who was Syndic at Sarnen. No troops had yet reached that valley, and there they could safely remain until the campaign was over, returning to Fluelen in the winter. With subdued and softened feelings towards the Rennbergs, the family of her "enemy" and "spoiler," as Karl had long been considered, Frau Müller kindly proposed that Annette should go with her and Mina to Sarnen, and be out of the way of danger also. Her parents were only too willing to consent to the plan, and as to Mina, the idea of having Annette with her almost turned her sorrow at leaving into joy. It was a pleasure in itself to find that her godmother's enmity was assuaged. With the hopefulness of youth, she immediately thought peace would come ere long, the French depart, and Karl return before Christmas. It was soon arranged that they should leave at early dawn, and that Annette's father should row them on the lake as far as Beckenried, where the Syndic would send a car to meet them. It was a sad removal for the aged Doctorinn, but two cheerful girls were with her, and youth at the prow, pleasure is often at the helm, and all who have travelled know that there is no better medicine for troubles of the kind, even to people in advanced years, than that of passing through beautiful scenery, in nature's most beautiful season. They received a warm welcome at Sarnen, and the two young girls vied with each other in making themselves useful and beloved, so much so, that the Syndic's family declared they should have some reason to regret when the war came to an end, and their friends returned to Fluelen.

IV.

At the end of August, when the Austrians stationed near Zurich were joined by the Russians under Korsakoff, the French redoubled their activity, and a battle seemed approaching. Karl was often employed in different ways. He was slightly clothed, for his clothes had begun to wear out, and they scarcely preserved him from the wind and rain; his rations, too, were trifling, and of an unwholesome kind, so he became gradually weaker and thinner; but though he mourned his unhappy lot, he did not like to let his friends know that he could be ransomed for a certain sum. He knew that his father could ill spare the money, and he had no interest.

One day the general, wishing to have a bird's-eye view of the Russian camp, he took Karl with him, laden with telescopes, to a neighbouring height. Beneath their eyes in the plain were Russian grenadiers exercising in close column. The Cossacks of Uralia passed and repassed on their fleet coursers, brandishing their long lances, and trampling pitilessly under foot the last hopes of the poor Swiss farmers. What a sight for poor Karl! He saw beneath him his lovely country, formerly so peaceful and happy, now given up to oppressors, and covered with destructive troops of different nations. He saw the little village of Wiedekin, where, in his happy childhood, he had often stayed with his good aunt, who had then been a mother to him, and he feared that in her

old age she might be suffering from the lawless soldiery. He knew that there was many a brave heart like that of his ancestor of Uri, William Tell, who would have resisted the invaders; but the Swiss knew none of the modern arts of warfare, and were compelled to accept the aid of the Austrians, who were only too glad to ward off the French, and fight them amidst nature's fortresses in Switzerland. About a week after this proceeding of the general's, Karl heard in the night a stir amongst the troops, but all was as silent as a great movement could be, and as mysterious as possible. When the day began to dawn, in the midst of a dense fog, a pontoon was formed, by which the French could cross the Limmat. A general attack then commenced, which lasted for two days, and spread death and destruction over the country. In the general *mélée*, Karl was forgotten; therefore, he took refuge in a wood, where he lay concealed until the next night. Half dead with cold and hunger, he then ventured to approach Zurich by a long circuit. Everywhere lay strewed broken vehicles, harness scattered, horses dead, and worse than all, dying and wounded soldiers. Half of a fine regiment of hussars was lying on the plain, like grass mown down. It was a sight most heart-rending; and he envied that man who had never seen a field of battle just after a GREAT ACTION.

After many days' suffering, by dint of twilight, Karl succeeded at last in reaching the orchard of his good aunt at Wiedekin. Pale as a ghost, and exhausted by hunger and fatigue, and trembling lest he should not find her alive, he entered an outer room of her dwelling. At the sound of footsteps she raised her head from her spinning, and beheld that

beloved nephew whom she thought she had lost for ever. Distaff and spindle were soon cast aside, and she pressed him in her arms, and thanked God for his safe return. She hastened to set food before him, and then told him, whilst he ate, that evil tongues had reported that he had deserted to the French ranks and enlisted in their cause. "I never would believe it, though they said you were seen with the French troops, but I have only to behold you to be sure that you were never willingly amongst them. As for myself, seeing what would happen, I placed all my valuables in the care of Messrs. Morgen, of Zurich, and remained here to take care of my house, and I have prevented the soldiers from ransacking it by being calm and firm, and by always giving them something to eat and drink, therefore they went off without doing the old woman any mischief. War is a terrible thing, but I suppose it has some use, though it is not befitting Christians to kill each other. We ought to be loving and kind."

The good aunt was so grieved to see the worn and exhausted state of her nephew, that she told him, "That he need not think of returning home to Fluelen, and that he should write to his father and tell him of his safety, and that he was going to stay at Wiedekin for a month or more, to help her with her farm and guard her house." She then told him all about the departure of Frau Müller, of Mina, and of Annette for Sarnen, until the French had left Fluelen. It was good news for Karl to find that Frau Müller was no longer at enmity with all the Rennberg family.

After a good night's rest, Karl set about writing home, and then went to see what was wanting to be done in the garden and the farm; he found plenty to

do there, and in the long evenings he employed himself in wood carving, and made boxes, and baskets, and animals as presents for his friends. At the end of October he took leave of his aunt, to return once more to Fluelen.

His father had told him that much injury had been done to Frau Müller's property, and that he could not employ himself better than by repairing the mischief both in the house and farm. Karl desired no better occupation, and he set to work immediately on his return. He was shocked to see the state of desolation that the place was in; the doors open, and everything turned upside down by the soldiers who had quartered there. The floors were covered with feathers and down, as if some birds of prey had torn to pieces a brood of innocent doves. Not a single piece of furniture remained uninjured, so there was a wide field for Karl's skill and industry.

During the autumn the French had made too free use of the Kirche-wasser* found in the stores. The Doctorinn had carried off her most valuable things, and neighbours had given house-room to many pieces of her furniture, therefore Karl hoped, before her return, the house would be fit to receive her once more. She and Mina were to return at the latter end of November, and Karl decided upon not presenting himself before them, nor the sacred treasure he possessed, until Christmas-eve. Both their families being of German descent, it seemed natural to defer their little gifts and pleasures until that night of general rejoicing. Annette and Mina had knitted no end of stockings, and mittens, and comforters, and shawls, and Karl had kept his best

* Cherry-spirit.

carvings to present on this solemn occasion. Annette had been permitted to tell Mina of the holy rose that he was then to produce, but to the Frau Doctorinn it was to come as a surprise.

When she returned, and was told all that Karl had done to her house, and garden, and farm, she could not find terms of her own strong enough to praise him, so she had recourse to Solomon and David: “‘Through wisdom is a house builded, and by understanding it is established, and by knowledge shall the chambers be filled,’ and whatsoever Karl doeth shall prosper.” She had slept at the Rennbergs’ on the night of her arrival, and Mina and Annette had gone to her house and prepared the rooms for her, with every little comfort and ornament she had been used to, therefore all this was set down to Karl’s account; and the girls were glad it was so, as it seemed to warm her heart towards him, and melt away her former enmity, scarcely leaving a trace behind.

Soon after her return home, Frau Müller had taken a little walk, and, on her return, she announced to Mina that “now she had not one enemy left.”

To this Mina only answered by a look of inquiry.

“ You know, dear child, how often I have wished that dog of Rennberg’s had been hanged or drowned when a puppy, well, I believe that he has saved my life. My sight is getting dim, and when I was out just now I took a wrong path, which led to the lake, and I believe I should have walked into it and been drowned, but I heard the barking of that Spitz, and he came close to me, and I looked to see what he barked for, and no Christian could say more plainly, ‘*Don’t go on!*’ for I was close to the water, and now I shall like to look

at that dog; and, as I said, I have not one enemy left."

Mina was glad to hear this, for she often feared that Spitz would follow Annette to the house, and disturb her godmother's peace of mind. When she told her friend this story, Annette thought of a little scheme for Christmas-eve, but this was to remain a **secret**.

All fear of the soldiery in this neighbourhood was over, and the farms were getting into order, though many families were pinched this winter. Still the Swiss, unused to luxuries, and possessing cheerful hearts, had a continual feast in their renewed quietness and peace. The good aunt from Wiedekin contrived to visit the Rennbergs, and brought ample provision with her; only too happy to spend Christmas with them, she spared neither toil nor trouble.

The happy day at length arrived, and all were to assemble before dark at Frau Müller's. Seated around a bright wood fire, fragrant with logs of fir and fir cones, the various presents were placed upon the table with different names upon them, and Annette, being the youngest of the party, handed them round, and then she slipped behind the arm-chair of the Doctorinn. At a given signal, Karl went to open the door, and let in the once-dreaded Spitz, holding in his mouth a paper parcel addressed to Frau Müller. Annette called him towards her, and, true to his training, he stood before the hostess on his hind legs. Annette then told Frau Müller that the parcel was for her, and that it contained a CHRISTMAS ROSE, brought too from the Holy Land. Although Frau Müller looked as if she thought it was too solemn a subject for a joke, she consented to open the packet. First came to sight her well-known box,

then another, and then the last was opened, and the long-loved and long-lost rose appeared.



“My very own!” she exclaimed, “and no mistake this time. Tell me, Karl,” she continued, “how all this came about, for I know it was through you? Where have you been, and where did you find this treasure?”

“If you would like to hear all my adventures,” replied the delighted youth, “I will recount the particulars of finding the Christmas Rose, the great object of my wishes for many a long day.”

All those who had heard the account before, were never tired of hearing Karl, and feeling for him, so he began, and related all that our readers already know.

The Frau Doctorinn raised her hands and opened her eyes in astonishment at his adventures and sufferings,

and when our hero concluded, she said, very solemnly, “I do not know what reward I can give you, Karl Rennberg ; you have made me truly happy, and Mina too.”

“I do not require any payment,” he replied ; “I am only too glad to make you and Mina happy.”

“Well then, Karl, you shall have a reward without wanting it. I am getting too old to look after my farm, and Mina is too young to manage it *alone* ; so you shall have it, and then you can come and live here. Before I die I should like to see Mina married, and I do not think she could have a better husband than Karl Rennberg, *when he is old enough* ; and as for Mina, she is like that good, virtuous woman that Solomon speaks of, ‘Her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband will safely trust in her. She will do him good and not evil, all the days of her life.’ ”

At this poor Mina turned round, her cheeks as red as rubies, and with a sense of propriety, or an impulse of her natural disinterestedness, she exclaimed, “Oh, my dear, kind godmother, do let Karl choose for himself, for he is so good ;—*when he is old enough !* ” she added, in a whisper. Hereupon Karl recovered from his surprise, and at last found words, and strong words, to express his gratitude. Luckily Annette was in his confidence, and she then divulged that Karl had said, “That he should never marry if Mina would not be his wife.”

The happy parents now came forward to pour forth their grateful thanks to their good neighbour, for the noble offer she had make to their son, and the good aunt from Wiedekin declared that she too must have something to do in the matter, and begged she might add some land to the farm, as she had no one to endow but Karl.

A merrier party could not have been found all round

the Lake of the Four Cantons, and in a short time enough had been said to make Father Rennberg propose that the betrothal of the young people should take place that very Christmas-eve. Whether it should be so or not, Frau Müller said, should be decided by the opening of the Christmas Rose; and Karl made no objection to such an ordeal, for he had already learned that the mystic rose never failed to open when put in water. Annette placed it in a little vase upon the table, well supplied with *warm* water. The oracle was favourable. Mina's mother's ring was produced, and the happy Karl Rennberg, and Wilhelmina Brenner, were betrothed.



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